

# *Poetry of the Desert*

*Edited by Elizabeth Howe*



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## *Introduction*

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Cover Photo: Western Sahara Desert, Morocco

*Desert* is a word that captures the imagination and, evokes an image of endless wastes stretching beyond the horizon; magical, mysterious, mirage-filled – menacing. Poets and writers down the ages used the desert, and its unique features, as metaphor-and-simile for the human spirit. As a symbol of struggle and endurance, faith and mobility, love, death, despair . . . but also of hope.

The Sahara (cover illustration), from *Sahra'*, Arabic for desert, is the world's largest hot sand desert. At three-and-a-half million square miles it reaches across thirteen African countries. Larger still is Antarctica; for while deserts comprise one-third of the earth's surface, are on all continents and some islands, they may either be hot, cold, or edaphic.

A few deserts are formed by rain shadows, as here in Palm Springs, where mountains block most precipitation to the areas they shadow. We are part of the large Sonoran Desert, which spans 120,000 square miles and receives more rain than any other in North America.

## *Introduction*

Great cultures arose from the deserts that surround the rivers Nile, Tigris, Euphrates, and Indus. Those historic expanses of the Middle East produced three, and arguably five, of the world's major religions.

That poetry evolved from the desert should not surprise. Infinities of space, sky, solitude, serenity, also struggle, provide a special environment for reflection and inspiration. From Dingiraddamu, a Sumerian poet with a clay tablet 4,800 years ago, to Mexico's best-known poet Octavio Paz (1914-1998), deserts are unique places in which to ponder the human soul.

These twenty-one poems, of *Poetry of the Desert* are by well-known and little-known poets: a small selection from both old and modern authors. Many volumes would be required for a complete spectrum of desert poetry.

May this brief offering bring you the spirit, the magic, and the delight of the desert.

Elizabeth Howe

July 7, 2008

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## *Desert Sands*

Sondra Ball

I sit on desert sands  
in the early morning.  
A small rattler passes by.  
A bird sings in the mesquite.  
A coyote pup whimpers softly.  
I wonder:  
if I sit here long enough,  
will the animals come to me?  
Will they touch my hand?  
Will I become one with the land?



## *Desert*

Karen Benke

In your eyes I saw only trails,  
Though you said you did not want to lead me –  
You said this reaching back for my hand.

We walked into a fevered desert  
Out where clouds rise then disappear,  
Out where I could not see  
Your caring for me was a choice  
I could not make.  
Still we continued  
Beyond contradiction  
My doubt, my desire  
Sifting into sand.



## *El Camino del Diablo*

Frank Colver

In southern Arizona,  
there lies an old trail.  
It crossed in this country,  
before the iron rail.  
They came by the thousands,  
their fortunes to seek.  
The bold and the boisterous,  
the timid and the meek.  
Many didn't make it,  
they fell by the way.  
Where the water had vanished,  
in the heat of the day.  
Their graves mark this land,  
in silent mounds of stone.  
Their companions traveled on,  
and left them alone.  
If you go there today,  
their spirit you can feel.  
But listen in the night,  
for the crunch of a heel.  
Yes they still travel here,  
their fortunes to seek.  
The bold and the boisterous,  
the timid and the meek  
They still die in this desert,  
alone in this land.  
Leaving their footprints,  
in the washes of sand.



## *Rattlesnake*

Brewster Ghiselin

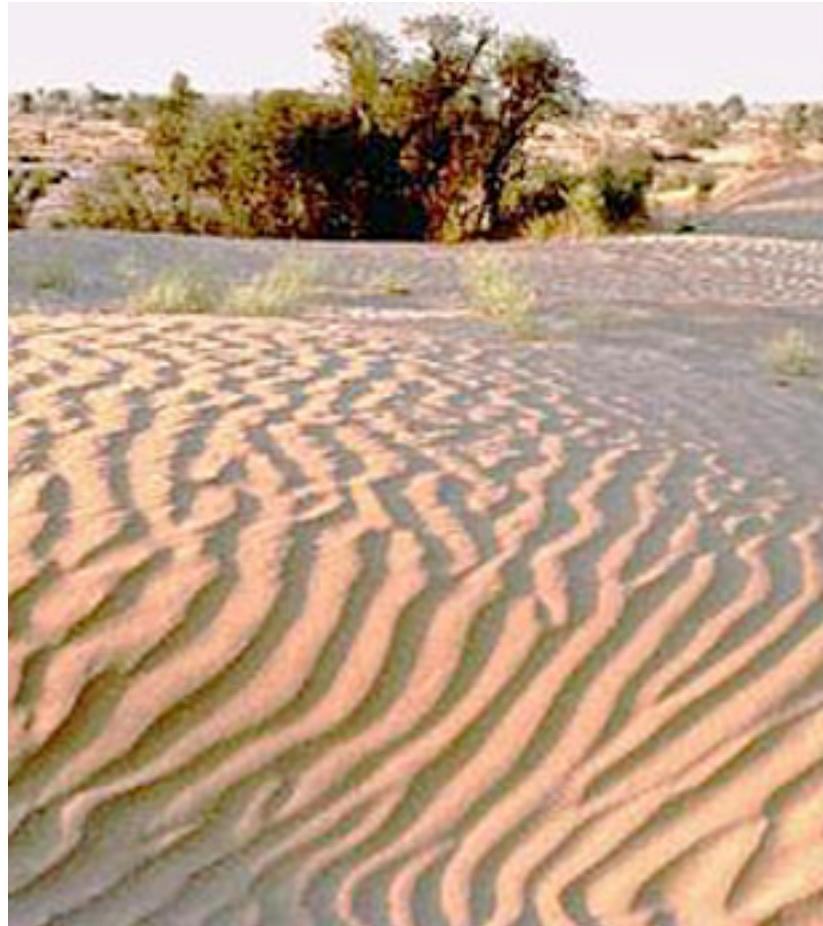
I found him asleep in the heat  
And dust of a gopher burrow,  
Coiled in loose folds upon silence  
In a pit of the noonday hillside.  
I saw the wedged bulge  
Of the head hard as a fist.  
I remembered his delicate ways:  
The mouth a cat's mouth yawning.  
I crushed him deep in dust,  
And heard the loud seethe of life  
In the dead beads of the tail  
Fade, as wind fades  
From the wild grain of the hill.

## *Arizona Desert*

Jan Haag



I walked off the highway,  
back behind the beer-bottle line,  
among the rabbit tracks and the sidewinder trails,  
back in the winter sand – barefoot –  
looking out for miles, beyond eternity  
and the grey hills bronzed by the setting sun,  
in the wind and the silence, wishing we were gone  
and our shacks had fallen to ruin  
so our grandchildren could hear tales  
of the settlers who tried to make it here  
when the land was still untamed,  
and who left  
because they didn't want to make a garden  
our of the grandeur of God's desert  
or an oasis out of the sand.  
People are not the only owners of the land,  
nor trees the only expression of God –  
so are devil's claw and the tumbleweed,  
the creatures of night and the big-horned sheep.  
The whip-tailed lizard sticks out his tongue  
at our presumption to garnish the land.  
He laughs when our wells run dry  
and the moon sets from an empty sky.



## *Karoo Mediterranean*

Geoffrey Haresnape

Once in the desert I have seen a tree,  
a pepper tree which flung a gush of green  
as delicately as a wave at sea  
when all its glassy underpart is seen.  
Along the branches at each hairpin twig  
the leaflets quivered in the evening breeze:  
to me it seemed this spread and shady rig  
was fresh with rippling currents like the sea's.  
Upon its summit a great bird had keeled  
itself and trimmed a fanned-out tail. Its wings  
that flapped were pliant sails in wind; it reeled  
there like a ship that tacks or, anchored swings.  
Even the tang of salt was brought to me  
upon the springtide of this inland sea.



## *The Desert Tastes Yellow*

Peter Horn

The desert tastes yellow on my tongue  
and bitter like herbs in a narrow gorge  
where water waits under the rocks  
for the next rain in five years  
and where fish suffocate  
which were born in the mountain streams  
but the frogs play their unending pan-flutes  
as soon as the moon rises over the black mountains.  
That then is the night: a dark blue ocean  
filled with sounds of shifting sands:  
Cricket chirping floats on the air  
like a hot breath, a song turned to ashes,  
vibrating between the white teeth  
of springbok skulls, a sigh of the wind.  
Here all the roads lead to nowhere in particular,  
They end in a sandy ford of soundless tracks  
through the whirlpool of desiccated dreams.  
Somewhere under the Southern Cross  
you lie on your back and hear  
the desert owl hoot its loneliness  
across the curve of the canyon.



## *Australian Interior*

Beate Josephi

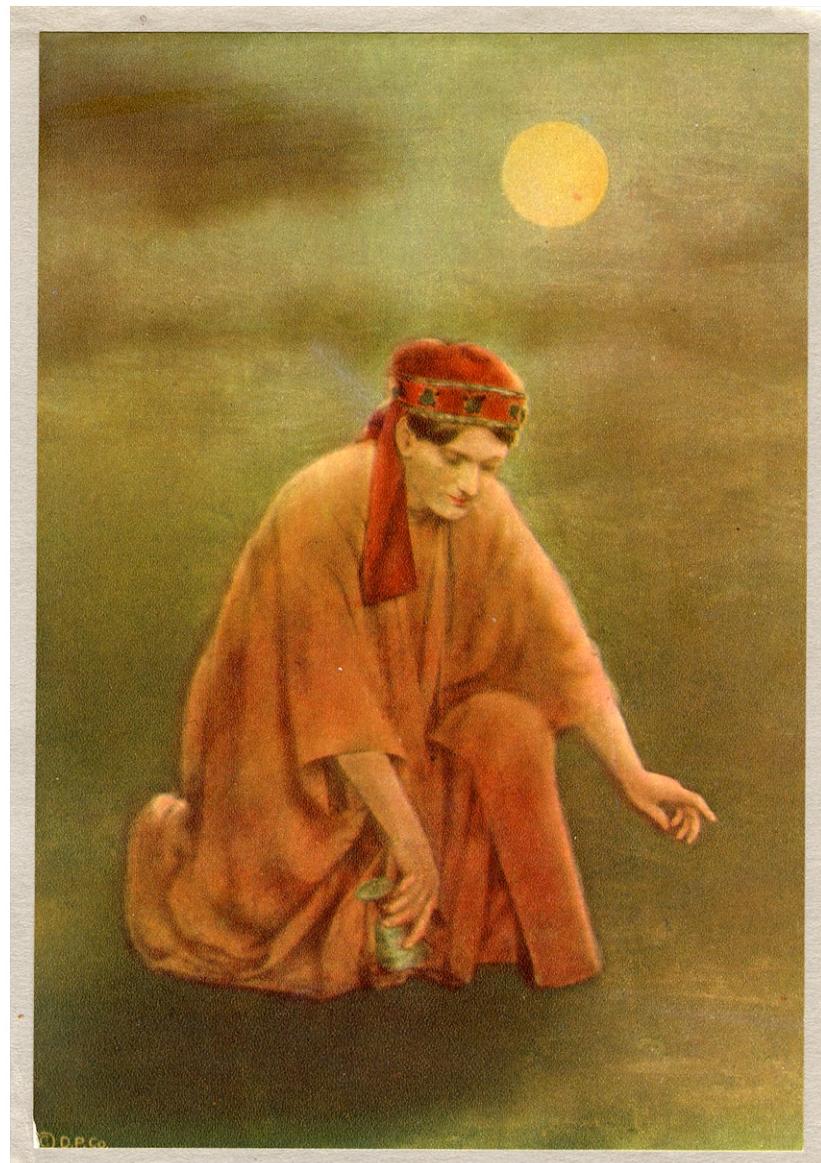
Rain carved the features of this country.

Noon eats away at the range. Lanky lines  
of watercourse and trees mark the soft sand  
or clay earth too hard to bury bones.

The wind here is heard only by travelers  
stumps of grass sing of their wandering feet.

Water beetles draw concentric circles  
spin shadows against red rock  
prefigure ancient drawings on sacred walls  
round lines of ochre light on shade.

Here the death of an emu remains  
longer than rain-fed water in pools.  
Slow boulders adrift on a northern face  
breaking as the sun heats the night cools.  
leaving ledges hanging over purple shadow.  
Stone slides into a plain of nowhere distances  
where spinifex's golden threads are a good season's  
temptation to forget the word for desert.



From: *The Rubaiyat*

Omar Khayyam

With me along some Strip of Herbage strown

That just divides the desert from the sown,  
Where name of Slave and Sultan scarce is known,  
And pity Sultan Mahmud on his Throne.

The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon  
Turns Ashes – or it prospers; and anon,  
Like Snow upon the Desert's dusty Face  
Lighting a little Hour or two – is gone

Here with a Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,  
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse – and Thou  
Beside me singing in the Wilderness –  
And Wilderness is Paradise enow.

The Moving Finger writes; and, having writ,  
Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.

And when Thyselv with shining Foot shall pass  
Among the Guests Star-scatter'd on the Grass,  
And in thy joyous Errand reach the Spot  
Where I made One – turn down an empty Glass!



*From: The Ballad of the King's Jest*

Rudyard Kipling

When spring-time flushes the desert grass,  
Our *kafilas* wind through the Khyber Pass.  
Lean are the camels but fat the frails,  
Light are the purses but heavy the bales,  
As the snowbound trade of the North comes down  
To the market-square of Peshawur town.

## *El Desierto*

Pablo Neruda

The hard midday of these great sands has come:  
the world is bare.  
wide, sterile and pure up to the remotest  
sandy frontiers:  
heard is the brittle sound  
of living salt, only salt marshes:  
the sun is broken glass in the vacant expanse  
and the dying earth has a dry  
and muffled sound of salt that moans.

One sees the circuit of the desert,  
and the high night space of the pampas  
a nocturnal circle, spacious and starry,  
where the Tamarugal region collects  
all the silence lost in time.

A thousand years of silence in a goblet  
of calcareous blue, of distance and moon,  
fashioned of the bare geography of night.

I love you, pure land, like many  
contrary things I've loved:  
the rose, the road, riches, the rite.

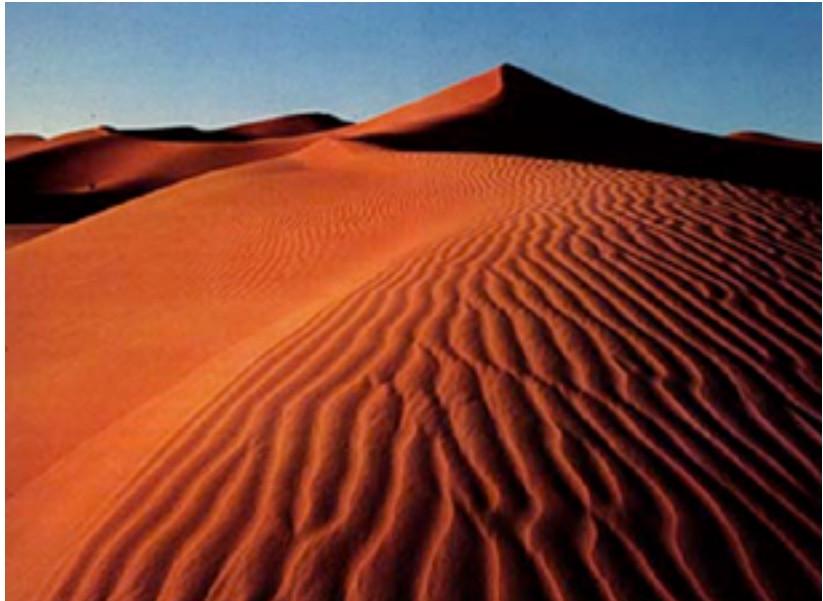
I love you, pure sister of the ocean.  
For me so difficult is this empty school  
in which there is not man, nor wall,  
no plant to lend me support.

I was alone.  
Life was a solitary place.  
This the courageous breast of the world.  
And I loved the system of your demanding form.  
The precise extent of your emptiness.



From: *Idilio Salvaje*

Manuel Jose Othon



What morbid grievous infinity of distance!

What sullen and inexorable flatness!

Such horror hovers over all the scene

as on a place steeped in the blood of slaughter.

And the shadow that lengthens, lengthens, lengthens,  
seems, with its tragic swathes, as though it were  
the mighty spirit, full of bitterness,  
of those doomed in hopelessness to die.

And there we tarry, with the overwhelming  
sense of the affliction of all the passions,  
beneath the weight of all the oblivions.

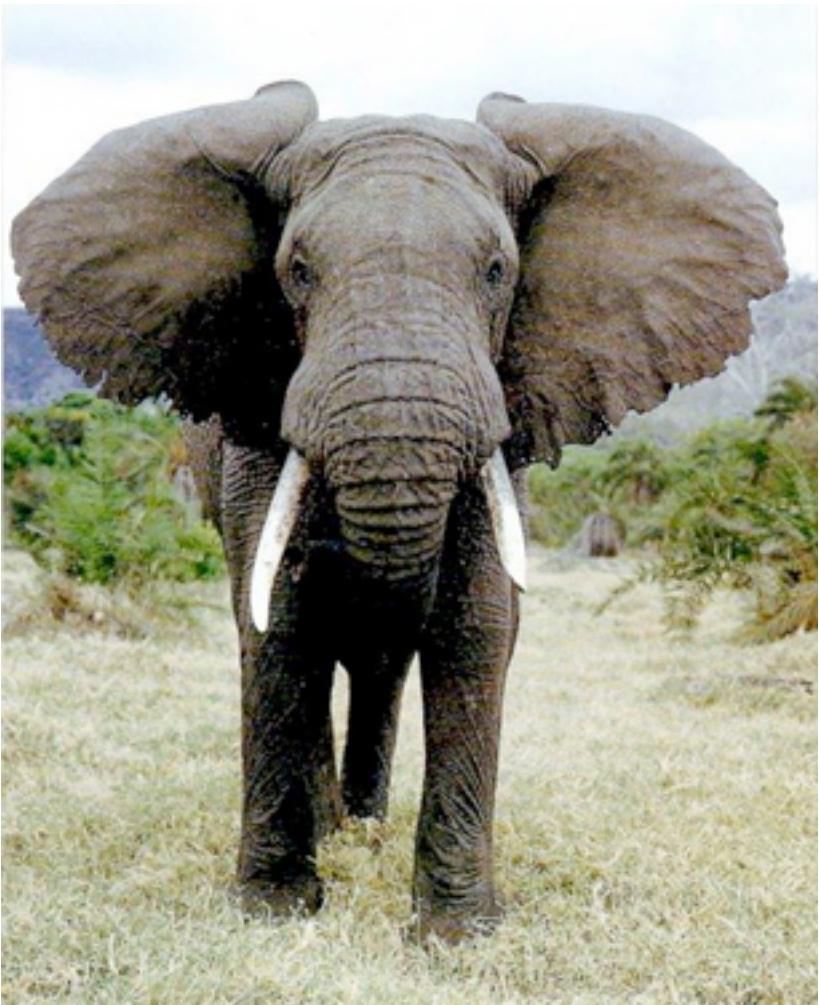
In a leaden sky the sun already  
dead; and in our lacerated hearts  
the desert and the desert and the desert!



## *Whitewater River*

Luann Pfost

The August sun does not reach  
the shadows of the old mesquite  
as it grows in the river bed.  
The soft dry sand, the sultry heat  
invites the visitor to sleep.  
Thunder in the mountains  
rumbling through the hills  
white water washes the boulders down  
the mesquite is gone, scattered.  
A seedpod rests in damp sand.



## *Afar in the Desert*

Thomas Pringle

**A**far in the Desert I love to ride  
With the silent Bushboy alone by my side,  
Away, away, from the dwellings of men,  
By the wild deer's haunt, by the buffalo's glen,  
By valleys remote where the oribi plays,  
Where the gnu, the gazelle and the hartebeest graze,  
And the koodoo and eland untamed recline  
By the skirts of grey forests o'er-hung with wild vine.  
Where the elephant browses at peace in his wood,  
And the river-horse gambols unscared in the flood,  
And the mighty rhinoceros wallows at will,  
In the fen where the wild ass is drinking his fill.

## *Rebekah*

Anne Ranasinghe



Dusk, and a gnawing wind from the desert.  
Flat the land, yellow and ochre and brown;  
Half-way point: Europe behind us in sunlight and mist,  
We fly to the East Towards darkness.  
Endlessly flowing, the indolent sand.  
Carcasses of dead things. Against the horizon  
Ten camels trudge, black and biblical  
And two girls dance  
With hand and ankle bells  
To the sound of bead rattling in a gourd.  
It is at this time of evening  
when women go out to draw water  
From the well that Rebekah, virgin and beautiful,  
Fills the trough from her pitcher  
For the camels to drink.  
She will journey on these camels until she meets Isaac  
Meditating in his fields. And though she wraps her veil  
More closely about her, he knows her beauty and  
Takes her for wife. She will become the mother  
Of thousands and millions.



## *The Desert Sentinel*

Charles M. Renno

The Joshua Tree, Arms akimbo,  
Salutes the morning sun  
Reports the denizens of the desert:  
“All accounted for, sir,”  
And settle for mid-day anonymity.  
Invisible against the shimmering, rocky hills,  
Lost in white-heat waves, Shadeless  
under relentless sun,  
Dressed in green and brown spike-tipped Mail,  
Bunches of ivory roses, heavy, waxy and ponderous,  
Lifted in challenge,  
The Joshua waits for the evening chill,  
Confident and determined,  
Bold against the crimson setting sun,  
And in the thickening twilight  
Welcomes the sidewinder, Gila monster, Ground owl,  
Horned toad, King snake, Prairie dog, Scorpion, and  
lonely coyote  
To the festival of the stars,  
In the high, clean evening air,  
Where the brilliant lights of night hover,  
Just beyond the finger tips,  
And beckon one to stand tip toe and Grasp Eternity.



## *The Desert March*

Shahriar Shahriari

They say the wheat cannot grow  
In the desert or *amidst* snow  
Will the clouds bring their rain?  
Will the snow melt once again?  
In the meantime will wheat survive?  
Will this grain become alive?

I seem to be that lone grain  
In my desert silent remain  
Endure the draught and sandy pain  
Till the clouds wash me again.  
They say clouds will only rain  
When they decide. We wish in vain.

No matter how brilliant a mind  
A soul that's wise, a heart that's kind  
  
When lost in this endless space  
Walking the desert pace after pace  
When of grace there's no trace  
It is futile for us to chase  
The spirit we try to embrace;  
God in God's time reveals God's face.



## *Ozymandias*

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I met a traveler from an antique land

Who said: "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone  
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,  
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown  
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command  
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read  
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,  
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;  
And on the pedestal these words appear:  
'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings;  
Look on my works ye Mighty, and despair!'  
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay  
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare  
The lone and level sands stretch far away."



## *Sonora For Sale*

Richard Shelton

This is the land of gods in exile  
they are fragile and without pride  
they require no worshipers

we come down a white road in moonlight  
dragging our feet like innocents  
to find the guilty already arrived  
and in possession of everything.

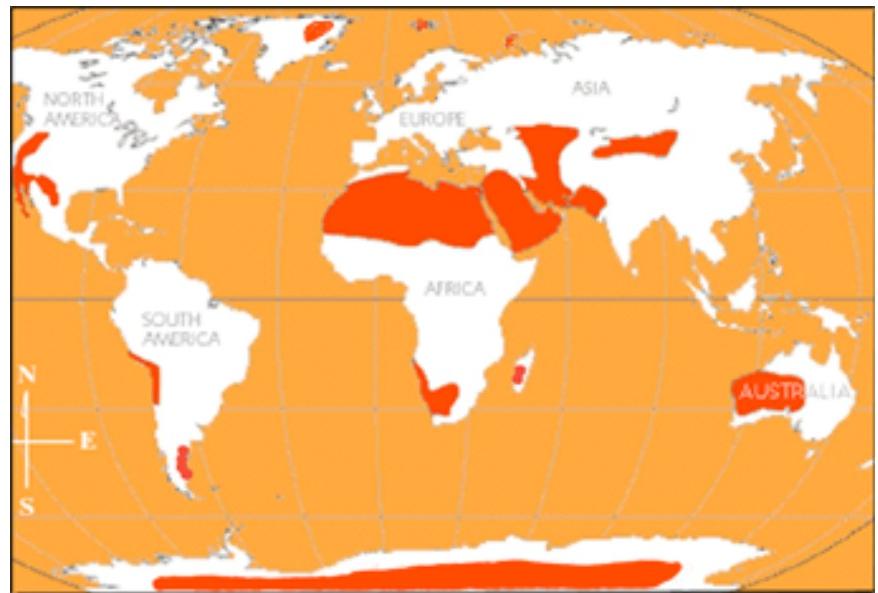
we see the stars as they were years ago  
but for us it is too late  
we are here we cannot turn back  
soon we hold out our hands  
full of money  
this is the desert  
it is all we have left to destroy



## *Bury Me with a Band*

Ofelia Zepeda

My mother used to say, “Bury me with a band.”  
and I’d say, “I don’t think the grave will be big enough.”  
Instead, we buried her with creosote bushes,  
and a few worldly belongings.  
The creosote is for brushing her footprints away as  
she leaves.  
It is for keeping the earth away from her sacred remains.  
It is for leaving the smell of the desert with her.  
to remind her of home one last time.



**Major Deserts of the World**

## Biographical Notes

### **Sondra Ball (19xx) -- *Desert Sands***

Sondra Ball was born in a cabin in Daniel Boone country....Pine Knot, McCreary County, Kentucky (present population of 1,549). She says: "it was several months before anyone thought to issue me a birth certificate." She attended Eastern College in St. Davids, Pennsylvania on an academic scholarship, majoring in anthropology and sociology. In addition to writing poetry, Sondra Ball is a ghostwriter and publisher. Presently she publishes an "on-line" bi-monthly magazine on the Internet, called AUTUMN LEAVES. It can be found at <http://www.sondra.net/al/>

### **Karen Benke (1966-) -- *Desert***

Recipient of grants from the Marin Arts Council and Poets & Writers, Karen Benke teaches poetry in Marin County, helping to coordinate the California Poets in the Schools program. Her poem *Desert* was written in 1997. Published in several anthologies and literary magazines, including Ploughshares and the Santa Clara Review, she was recently awarded a writing residency at Djerassi Resident Artists Program in Woodside, California. She lives in Mill Valley, CA. with her playwright husband.

### **Frank Colver (1935-) -- *El Camino del Diablo***

Frank Colver was born and raised on an orange ranch, about two miles east of the town of Covina, in the San Gabriel Valley, Southern California. When he was a very young boy he had his first view of a desert, the Mojave, from an overlook in the San Bernardino Mountains; he remembers it as if he was "looking at another world." Colver writes poetry about the places and events that move him on his travels. Such was the case with his trip along El Camino del Diablo. "The feelings that this ancient trail bring forth are very powerful. Places like Tinajas Altas can stir deep emotions. It can bring about an emotional connection with the hardships and the loss that others have experienced. When viewing the old graves among the bushes, it's easy to imagine the sorrow of someone having to leave behind the grave of a loved one, knowing that they would never be able to return and visit the grave site."

### **Brewster Ghiselin (1903-) -- *Rattlesnake***

Brewster Ghiselin was born in Webster Groves (St. Louis) Missouri. He received an M.A. from the University of California, and after a year at Oxford University joined the faculty of the University of Utah. There he founded and directed the Writers' Conference, which brought leaders as diverse as Allen Tate, Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss) and Vladimir Nabokov. His published volumes of poetry are *Against the Circle*, *The Nets*, *Light, Country of the Minotaur*, *Windrose*, and *Flame*. In 1970 the National Institute of Arts and Letters gave him an award in recognition of his poetry. His anthology *The Creative Process* continues to interest and influence readers throughout the world. He also published fiction and criticism.

### **Jan Hagg (1933-) -- *Arizona Desert***

Jan Hagg is a writer, poet, textile artist and former Director of National Production Programs for the American Film Institute; very much a Renaissance woman. She has written over 2,000 poems, including a series of twenty-nine inspired by Rumi. Her *Desolation Poems* use 333 of the poetic forms used in English. Recently she created a Website entitled 21<sup>st</sup> Century Art C.E.-B.C., sponsored by the National Endowment of the Arts, the Benton Foundation, and the Seattle Art Museum, among others.

### **Geoffrey Haresnape (1939-) -- *Karoo Mediterranean***

Born in Durban, South Africa, Geoffrey Haresnape is the author of three collections of poetry, *Drive of the Tide* (1976), *New Born Images* (1991) and *Mulberries in Autumn* (1996). His poem *Karoo Mediterranean* was written in 1968. He has also published a prize-winning novel, *Testimony* in 1992. His most recent publication is *African Tales from Shakespeare: Ten Narratives Based upon His Poetry and Plays* (1999). In all his work Haresnape has been committed to a South African perspective upon life and literature. John Povey has written of him in *World Literature Written in English*: "Here is poetry that is evocative, tender and intimate. It calls upon the shared memory."

### **Peter Horn (1934-) -- *The Desert Tastes Yellow***

Professor Horn is a German-born South African Poet. He was Head of the Department of German at the University of Cape Town from 1974 to 1999. His published volumes of poetry include: *Voices from the Gallows Trees*, *Walking through our Sleep*, *Silence in Jail*, *Civil War Cantos*, *Poems 1964-1989*, *An Axe in the Ice*, and *The Rivers that Connect us to the Past*. He was awarded the Pringle Prize of the South African English Academy in 1974, as well as several other important literary Prizes and Awards. Dirk Klopper in the Staffrider wrote: "A new beginning for South African Poetry. *The Plumstead Elegies* and the *Civil War Cantos* will, I am convinced, reveal to posterity that we, too, had our Neruda, our voice of conscience, in our dark night of oppression."

### **Beate Josephi (1948-) -- *Australian Interior***

Beate Josephi, born in Germany, has lived in Australia for over 30 years. Her book of poems, *Pilgrim Routes*, was released in 1993, and she has widely published in magazines. She translates essays and poetry and has published a book of translations of four German-speaking women poets, *Miracles of Disbelief*. In 1986 and 1988 she chaired Australia's most prominent writer's festival, Writer's Week of the Adelaide Festival of Arts. Currently she is Coordinator of Journalism at the School of Communications and Multimedia at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia.

### **Omar Khayyám (1048-1123) -- Quatrains from *The Rubaiyat* (Fitzgerald Translation)**

Ghiyath al-Din Abd'l-Fath Umar ibn Ibrahim Al-Nisaburi al-Khayyámi was born at Naishápúr in Khorassán (north-east province of Iran). A literal translation of the name al-Khayyámi means 'tent maker.' Khayyám is Persia's most famous astronomer, mathematician and poet. In addition to the re-nowned translation by Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1883) the 150 quatrains have been translated into more than 39 languages. Fitzgerald provided an adaptation instead of a strict translation, and there are many different versions of any given quatrain. Khayyám's works included many books on mathematics including *Problems of Arithmetic* and a *Treatise on Demonstration of Problems of Algebra*.

**Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) -- *The Ballad of the Kings Jest***

Joseph Rudyard Kipling was born of British parents in Bombay, India. As a novelist, short story writer, and poet, he is best remembered for his celebration of the British Empire – the one, on which the ‘sun never sets’, as well as his children’s stories. Educated at boarding school in England, he returned to India at the age of 17, where he worked as a journalist. His *Barrack Room Ballads*, *The Seven Seas* and the two *Jungle Books* were all highly successful. His most famous novel is *Kim* (1901), which, although essentially a children’s book, is considered a classic. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1907

**Pablo Neruda (1904-1973) -- *El Desierto***

**(Translated by Elizabeth Howe)**

Ricardo Reyes Basoalto was born in the town of Parral in Chile. At the age of thirteen, his first poem was published in the daily “La Mañana”. At sixteen he became a contributor to the literary journal “Selva Austral” under the pen name of Pablo Neruda, which he adopted in memory of the Czechoslovak poet Jan Neruda (1834-1891). Between 1927 and 1935, he was in charge of honorary consulships in Burma, Ceylon, Java, Singapore, Buenos Aires, Barcelona, and Madrid. During that period, his poetic production included, among other works, a collection of surrealistic poems, *Residencia en la tierra* (1933), which marked his literary breakthrough.. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1971.

**Manuel José Othón (1858-1906) -- *Wild Idyll***

**(Translated by Samuel Beckett)**

Manuel Othón, born and died in San Luis Potosí, Mexico was, to quote Octavio Paz, “a recluse, but his solitude was that of the wise and not the haughty man. He studied at the Instituto Científico y Literario de San Luis, and received a law degree when he was 23 years old. His verse is almost exclusively about nature and the landscapes around him. Although poetry was his main interest in life, he did write some plays and narrative prose. Othón’s complete works were not published until 1945. His poem *Idilio Salvaje* (Wild or Untamed Idyll) was published in 1906, and is considered one of the greatest compositions in the Spanish language.

**Luann Pfost (1958-) -- *Whitewater River***

Luann Pfost was born in Indio, California, which is in the Sonora Desert. She has been writing poetry as long as she can remember. Pfost says: “I wrote *Whitewater River* in August of 1998. I was wishing for rain while watching a distant thunderstorm shower the Thousand Palms area. It was a combination of this, past experiences in hiking some of the dry washes, and the memory of the Whitewater River in full flood from tropical storm Kathleen carrying a large tree down stream.”

**Thomas Pringle (1789-1834) -- *Afar in the Desert***

The South Africans themselves call Thomas Pringle “the father of their poetry”. A remarkable man in every sense of the word, he was a true pioneer. In 1819, shortly after becoming the editor of The Edinburgh Monthly Magazine, his first volume of poems was published. But literature proved unremunerative, and he decided to emigrate to Cape Town, South Africa. He settled his family in the bush, and with a friend attempted to achieve a literary career in Cape Town. He returned to London and associated himself with the men who were working for the abolition of slavery, notably with Wilberforce, Coleridge and Clarkson. He died in London at the age of forty-six. Thomas Pringle wrote some of South Africa’s best poetry; adjudged so by Kipling, by Coleridge, and by South Africa’s writer-poet R.C. Russell. A 20<sup>th</sup> century African poet, Vine Hall wrote:

*Pringle, we love thy scorn of wrong,  
Thy simple, heartfelt song,  
A knightly soul unbought and unafraid,  
This country oweth much to thy two-edged blade.*

**Anne Ranasinghe (1925) – REBEKAH**

Born in Germany, Anne Ranasinghe fled to England in 1938, when she was age 13. Some years later she met and married a Physician who took her to live in his native country, Sri Lanka. She has published 12 books of poems, short stories, essays, and radio plays, which have been broadcast and published in 17 countries and translated into nine languages. She has won a number of prizes, Michael Lentz in Germany made a 45 minute film of her life for WDR, and Juan Allende-Blin, an ex-patriate composer from Chile living in Germany wrote a Horspiel titled *Muttersprachlos* (Without Mother Tongue) using his music and her poetry. She is a founder member of the English Writers Cooperative of Sri Lanka for which she works as Hon Treasurer and Secretary. In its ten plus years existence it has published over 100 new writers in a journal titled *CHANNELS*.

**Charles M. Renno (1934-) -- *Desert Sentinel***

Dr. Charles Renno is best known as a poet and educator. His collected poems, *POT OF GOLD* (1998), included *Desert Sentinel*. Born in Missouri and raised in the Mid-West, Renno first came to the Mojave Desert in 1957. At that time, the Victor Valley still had much of its natural beauty, as well as natural plant and animal life; *Desert Sentinel* reflects that scene. A member of the High Desert Chapter of the California Writers' Club and The Silver Lakes Writers Group, Renno continues to write poetry, much of it about the desert, as well as short stories.

**Shahriar Shahriari (1963-) -- *The Desert March***

Shahriar Shahriari was born in Iran, trained as a Mechanical Engineer in England and Canada, and is currently residing in Los Angeles. He has published 3 books: *Thus Spake the Real Zarathushtra, 1+1=3*, and *The Z Factor*. All deal with creativity and spirituality as taught by Zarathushtra. Internet involved, his Web sites are dedicated to the poetry and lives of Omar Khayyam ([www.zbnet.com](http://www.zbnet.com)), Hafiz ([www.HafizOnLove.com](http://www.HafizOnLove.com)), and Rumi ([www.RumiOnFire.com](http://www.RumiOnFire.com)), and the spiritual philosophy of Zarathushtra ([www.Zarathushtra.com](http://www.Zarathushtra.com)).

**Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) -- *Ozymandias***

Shelley, who is considered to be one of England's leading poets, was born in Field Place, near Horsham, Sussex. In his short lifetime, he proved to be one of the most controversial of English Romantic poets. *The First Collected Edition* (1839) of his poems was published, with a preface by his wife, Mary. Between his *Queen Mab* (1813) and *Prometheus Unbound* (1822), Shelley's production of poetry fills over 800 pages of print. He was drowned in a boating accident (in Italy) at the age of 29.

**Richard Shelton (1933-) -- *Sonora For Sale***

Richard Shelton, the author of nine books of poetry, was born in Boise, Idaho. His poems have been published in hundreds of magazines and journals, translated into many languages, and have even been set to music by established American composers. For over forty years he has been a resident of Southern Arizona, and is currently a Regent's Professor in the English Department of the University of Arizona.. In addition to his poetry he has written a number of screenplays. Shelton's first book of nonfiction, *Going back to Bisbee*, won the 1992 Western Book Award for creative nonfiction. If there is such a title as "Poet of the Desert", it belongs to Richard Shelton.

**William Edgar Stafford (1914-1941) -- *At the Bomb***

***Testing Site***

William Stafford was born in Hutchinson, Kansas. He received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Kansas and a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa. His decision to be a conscientious objector to the Second World War is reflected in much of his writings. He left Kansas in 1948 to move West to accept a teaching assignment at Lewis and Clark College. The author of 35 books, he received the 'National Book Award' in 1963 for *Traveling Through the Dark* and a 1992 'Western States Book Award' for lifetime achievement in poetry. He served as poetry consultant to the Library of Congress in 1970; a post now designated "American Poet Laureate."

**Ofelia Zepeda (1954-) -- *Bury me with a Band***

Dr. Zepeda is Professor of Linguistics and American Indian Studies at the University of Arizona. She is the author of the only pedagogical textbook on the Tohono O'odham language, *A Papago Grammar*. Her poetry is written both in English and in her native language. She is the author of two books of poetry: *Ocean Power: Poems from the Desert* and *Jewed 'I-Hoi/Earth Movements*. Dr. Zepeda has also edited and co-edited a number of books of Native American poetry.



A fascination for deserts inspired Elizabeth Howe to edit *Poetry of the Desert*. Born in Langdon Hills, Essex, 1932, she worked for magazines in England, Canada, and the U.S. writing about fashion and beauty, the field of Datamation, Shakespeare for children, and Folklore and Mythology at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1995, her first novel, *Italian Dreams* was predicted “best-seller” by the London Standard. She currently resides in Palm Springs, California with her husband, who is a Futurologist.